

IN SHORT  
**CROSSROADS**

FROM THE BEGINNING

Julie Washington

*This short article gives a potted history of Crossroads from its inception in 2005 to the current day, noting some of the 'historic landmarks' we have experienced. The journal has come a long way in that short time and the editorial board, past and present, and myself in particular, are duly impressed with progress to date.*

**C**rossroads: an Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics began as an idea put forward in the school review and discussed at the subsequent staff retreat of 2005. It took a while for the seeds planted then to start to grow, but surely and very slowly they did, and the first group of students got together with a staff liaison to begin the journey. There were a number of false starts, as there always are, and things started to settle into the on-going routine of developing a journal.

Initially the aims of *Crossroads* were to give postgraduate students within the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics the opportunity to experience academic publishing. During this time a number of the founding students left for various personal and scholastic reasons; and the process began all over again with a new set of individuals' visions and means to realise them.

By mid-2006 a set of working aims was agreed and a five year plan proposed. *Crossroads* became the responsibility of the Queensland Association of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics Publishing Incorporation, which co-incidentally was made up of members of the Editorial Board. We were now a singular entity conforming to all the relevant government rules and regulations incumbent upon non-profit organizations. The Board were thrown into a flurry of compliance and many Board members began to experience roles of treasurer, secretary, public relations, book review co-ordination, chairing duties and giving first assessments of submitted articles and subsequent copy-editing for those that passed the second stage of peer review. The first Chairperson was Craig Barrett and unfortunately due to outside commitments he had to leave before publication of the first issue.<sup>1</sup> I stepped into the role soon after and the first issue was published with much fanfare, beverages, toasts and nibbles on the beautiful parquet flooring in the eastern third floor corridor of the Forgan Smith Building.

It has been a steep and constantly changing journey for Board members and *Crossroads* itself since that first issue. As happens with all entities, *Crossroads* began to grow and develop beyond our initial vision. Issue two was opened to all students of the school, not only postgraduates. After the first

1. A full list of current and past members of the editorial board can be found on the website.

**JULIE WASHINGTON** is the current chair of the editorial board and has been a member of the Crossroads team since late 2005. She is one of the three "almost"-original members still left on the board.

two issues were published, our technical officer, Sheldon Peters, alerted us to the fact that people from all over the world were beginning to access the site. After due consideration, it was decided to open submission to people beyond the school and the university itself, to accept submissions from across the globe. To date we have received submissions from as far afield as America, Brazil, England, Iceland, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Oman, Portugal, Senegal, Singapore and of course Australia. This means that submissions have been received from all continents, except Antarctica. Statistics show that we have been accessed by over thirty-seven countries, including Georgia, Japan, Montenegro, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Serbia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turkey, as well as larger European countries, and other English-speaking countries, as would be expected.

The articles in *Crossroads* are now from all levels of academia; from professors to undergraduate students and all stages in between. They deal with any one of the core disciplines of the journal, including those with an interdisciplinary focus and are subjected to a rigorous double blind-peer review process. The final review is done by academics with specialist knowledge in the relevant areas, and we thank them for their generous donations of time and effort, and due to the double-blind peer-review process in place, they must remain anonymous.

In volume one, issue two we published the first "In Short" article. This section is dedicated to the publication of shorter articles that are not double blind peer reviewed, but that the board considers worthy of publication, and again the contributors have backgrounds from various academic levels. In fact Luiz Costa Lima published his piece "The Intellectual and the Professional" in this section in volume two, issue one in 2007. Also in this issue we published the first book review.

*Crossroads* began by publishing what we consider to be general issues, those consisting of articles that are not linked in any thematic manner. This continues to be the case, however we now also publish special issues that are dedicated to articles themed around a particular person or generated by a particular conference or event. Volume two, issue two and volume four, issue two are two special issues dedicated to the world-renowned Brazilian philosopher Luiz Costa Lima. The first included sixteen articles, some written specifically for the issue, and others translated from Portuguese and available to the English speaking world for the first time; the second, a rejoinder issue, also included further original material. Volume four, issue one, published in 2009, focused on the works of the Australian philosopher Max Deutscher, who published five original works with us. Volume three, issue two, also from 2009, published articles generated by the Rhizomes IV conference held in conjunction with the university in February 2008 with the theme "Power, Violence and Language," and we have just published volume five, issue one, which brings together articles from the first Alternative Expressions of the Numinous conference held at the university in August 2006. And of course this issue celebrating the centenary of The University of Queensland is another special issue. The Governor General of Australia, The University of Queensland Alumnus of the Year in 2008, Her Excellency Ms. Quentin Bryce, has also felt it to be sufficiently special, as she has written an introduction to this issue for us.

In 2007 *Crossroads* was listed in the National Library Catalogue, and the National Bibliographic Database. We are archived by the National Library of Australia's PANDORA site (Australia's Web Archive), for, to quote their correspondence, 'electronic publications of lasting cultural value ... of national significance.' This means that articles will always be accessible, and will not disappear even if the journal itself does – not a prospect we spend any time contemplating. We have reached as high as eighth on the international Google listing under "Crossroads" and as high as third on the Australian version of the site.

We launched the first Annual *Crossroads* Short Essay Competition in 2008, open only to students who had completed at least two subjects within the school. Twenty entries were submitted and place winners received book vouchers generously donated by the UQ Bookshop. Those that received places and commendations were published in volume three, issue one of the journal. All entries received certificates of place or participation that the school kindly financed. The second competition saw twenty-five

submissions and winners and commendations were published on a separate page on the website. The Co-Op Bookshop agreed to carry on the support begun by the UQ Bookshop and in fact doubled the prize money in 2009. We certainly thank them and the school for their on-going support.

In 2008 I lodged our application for inclusion on the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) journal listing, a project of the Australian Research Council, and in 2010 we were accorded a tier-A ranking, quite an achievement for a journal that has been in existence for such a short time. This is a tremendous recognition of the time and effort that all the board members from the journal's inception have put into making this journal a world class and world recognised journal. We have set ourselves a high standard to maintain, though I am sure that it will continue, and if at all possible, climb further.

Amongst the ongoing development have been changes in the font, endnotes have become footnotes, the beloved Roman numerals of some have metamorphosed into Arabic numerals, and I am sure that there will be many more changes to come: all signs that *Crossroads* is an evolving and progressive journal. We are also assembling an advisory board and welcome those who are members at this time. Their names and affiliations can be found on the website.

Being on the *Crossroads* editorial board has given members greater understanding and skills to take with them beyond the university; skills that will hopefully be used in other non-profit organizations to help keep the Australian sense of community bond alive, wherever it may occur. It has engendered a sense of commitment, teamwork, responsibility, adaptability (I personally prefer in-text references), copy-editing produces an eye for detail, reading others' work in the initial stages helps to hone writing skills, and most importantly, it has generated a sense of professionalism, and I am sure that all these will continue as good habits once board members move on. As board members do move on to other aspects of their lives, new members join, and I certainly hope that all these attributes will be passed on to and experienced by the next group of "trainees." We have in place a probationary system whereby both potential board members and current board members can assess the impact of what being a board member actually means before joining as a full member. The levels of time and work commitment are not for all. Those that stay do so with a great sense of pride and achievement. And such is the loyalty generated, that there are some on the editorial board who are not currently students, but feel so passionately about the project that they continue to donate their time and expertise.

Board meetings are entertaining affairs, we have even indulged in birthday cakes and farewell drinks, and I can happily say that there has not been one meeting when agreements have not been reached, often after a great deal of discussion and persuasion. As part of our commitment to a sense of academic community, and as a way to socialise between students and academics of the school, we also run each year a Melbourne Cup Luncheon, which attracts quite a number where we indulge in good food, champagne, sweeps and fashion parades, with heaps of laughter thrown in just for good measure. Students get to see that staff can be human too.

*Crossroads* has got beyond the dreaded third issue level and proven its academic worth. I am currently discussing the potential of a hard copy version as well as an on-line version with Taylor and Francis, although presently this is a vision for the mid-future not the near-future. And perhaps a future where Jean-Luc Picard, stands on the deck of the USS Enterprise, and is speechless to receive a printed book, where the norm is only electronic versions, is not that far away.

I am sure that *Crossroads* will continue well into the future, in electronic format and/or hard copy, and we do always hope to be able to print extra-special issues such as this one. For myself, I can say that I have enjoyed every moment so far, including the 4:30 am emails with Sheldon to make sure we get the next issue out on the appointed day; reading all the articles submitted has broadened my knowledge as I have read many articles that would not normally be within my sphere; I have been in contact with academics from across the globe and get to address them by their first names, and some have even invited me to stay if I happen to be in their neck of the woods; I hope I have been of help to editorial board members as well as those who have submitted articles to the journal, as I have always done my

best to encourage authors and to point out areas of improvement, even for the unsuccessful – must be a hang-over from being a story editor for Universal Pictures. I believe that being a board member helps to bridge the gap between reality and academia, and for me it has helped to keep that connection alive. I hope to be associated with this wonderful little journal of ours for many years to come.